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Introduction

Cultural Heritage of Central and Eastern Europe is still little known, but is increasingly being exposed as an area for scientific research. This region of Europe has experienced exceptional historical events in the twentieth century. Along the majority societies associated with different states, there lived communities of the minority and stateless, torn by totalitarian regimes of the previous century. The politics of assimilation aimed at the national, ethnic, and religious minorities has taken an enormous toll on their cultural heritage. The empty, devastated Jewish synagogues, Orthodox, Greek and Roman Catholic churches serving as warehouses are still to be seen on these lands. We encounter fallen mansions or houses abandoned in a hurry of those who once lived their life in a colourful multicultural reality of the borderland. The fall of communism in this part of Europe has restored the memory of the “absent” and triggered activities to rescue their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. In Central-Eastern Europe, the passing decades have been characterized by many interesting and new projects created within the framework of the forgotten and uncomfortable heritage, undertaken by many public, self-government, private and non-profit institutions. They are supported by the organizers and implementers of culture, as well as regional activists and enthusiasts who realize there will be a big void in the history and collective memory of this region if the minorities’ heritage is to disappear.

The monograph includes papers from international researchers tackling various issues on cultural heritage and its management. They present multiple involvements of this area of culture within different European countries’ politics or ideology. The monograph includes a hefty number of articles on identity and collective memory – the old, the new and the newly built – related to specific nations or ethnicities of Central European culture. The opening articles undertake the issues of Romania and Lithuania, countries enjoying

now more and more scientific and social projects as well as increasing care of the state in respect to their cultural heritage. The article of Ewa Kocój refers to the specifics of post-memory within the framework and management of cultural heritage in Romania and the institutions responsible for this area of culture. It presents the monuments of tangible culture, which have been entered in the UNESCO world heritage list, e.g. the painted Orthodox churches and monasteries of Bukovina, Maramures Orthodox churches, Dacian Fortresses from Orăştiei Mountains, fortified churches of Transylvania; there are also brief comments on the discourse involving these monuments and establishing the memory of them in the Romanian culture. Svetlana Poligienė acquaints us with the sacral heritage of Lithuania, presenting both the legal bases for its protection, as well as the principal monument classifications. Her analyses include the years 1994–2005 and concentrate on the description of practices related to inventarisation and classification of sacral objects that are at present located in Lithuania.

The article presented by Krzysztof Kowalski reminds us that the fall of the East Bloc and the gradual expansion of the European Union have both resulted in undertaking new activities in the field of heritage. On the one hand, European society displays a strong need for building the past dating back to the heterogeneous, multinational and cosmopolitan achievements of Europe; on the other – there is a tendency to determine and preserve the traditional and commonwealth element of European heritage. The author presents the origins the European Heritage Label project as well as analyses its practical implementation on the example of the Gdańsk Shipyard in Poland. Iwona Sowińska, in turn, tracks the mechanisms of constructing the memory of Porrajmos – the Roma holocaust – in contemporary European cinema. She shows that the fall of communism, and the related opening of borders, resulting in the multiple migrations of the Roma, as well as the development of research on the Nazi genocide have contributed to the creation of new cultural texts within the audiovisual framework, sometimes remaining, however, within the field of the old mythology and stereotypical representation of the Roma culture.

Roman Batko, on the other hand, presents the animating activities of entrepreneurs aimed to “disenchant” the collective memory of the Wieliczka Jews, from near Kraków in Poland. They rely on remembering the mutual neighbourhood and achievements of Jews and Poles, as well as these elements of cultural heritage which have been forgotten as a result of blurring the memory of our “friars minor” in the post-war politics of the Polish state. A similar theme is explored in the article of Dorota Sieroń-Galusek, who presents the projects put forward by the Borderland Foundation in Sejny, Poland, referring to the restoration of memory of our neighbours living in

the north-eastern part of Poland. These activities serve to build a new social space that replaces previous memory decoys with the real space for inter cultural and intergenerational dialogues, telling a new story and triggering new emotions in respect to tradition. Krzysztof Pleśniarowicz, in turn, writes about exceeding the concept of cultural heritage within the framework of contemporary theatre, which “escapes the illusion” by developing new time, space and thematic forms as well as new actor-spectator relations.



Old Jewish Cemetery,
Siret, Romania
Photo: Ewa Kocój

The monographs also presents the relations between cultural heritage and cultural tourism. Magdalena Woźniczko, and Dominik Orłowski show the so-called colourful village – Zalipie – a place, where tradition combines with contemporary ethnographic tourism. They present virtues of the village in the context of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which attracts people from the whole country, and the rest of the world. Katarzyna Plebańczyk uncovers the culinary heritage of Poland, i.e. the so-called local and regional cuisine, which is more and more popular in advertising campaigns or branding tourist products and promoting entrepreneurship. Such activities enhance the significance of cultural tourism in the area of Central-Eastern Europe and consequently stimulate the activities undertaken in the field of the local hospitality industry.

The two last articles ponder on the issues of historical Kraków's cultural heritage management and cultural institutions found there. Joanna Szulborska-

-Łukaszewicz discusses the policies of the city of Kraków within the framework of creating the so-called sustainable city development, while taking into account the quality of citizens' lives. She shows that historical cities and their cultural heritage have their "own problems", and by implementing a proper development strategy they can set an example to other towns of the region. Alicja Kędziora and Emil Orzechowski present the activity of the Foundation for Support of Modjeska's Life and Art Research, an institution taking action for the collection of cultural heritage involving this worldwide famous Polish actress.

Reading different authors, depending on which Central and Eastern European country we are reading about, we can see that cultural heritage has been treated in various ways by the official political and scientific discourse. We can observe the strategies of recalling, appropriating, as well as forgetting about this heritage. There are also attempts to "disenchant" issues within the sphere of collective memory and assign the heritage with new meanings, recognized within the framework of accounting for the difficult past. In a broader sense, the anthropological and humanistic, social, cinematographic, theatrical and culture management studies bring many reflections on the social process of the rejected heritage construction and ways of experiencing this fact by those, whose heritage – paradoxically – was not indexed, but subject to gradual annihilation. This approach then makes cultural heritage one of the characters within the complexity of this culture, letting the researchers "tame" it in various ways, keeping in mind that it is an area of many elements intertwining, allowing for it to be researched in many different configurations. The managers of culture follow into the footsteps of researchers and undertake new challenges. They place minority heritage in description, interpretation, find its place in existing institutional expositions and involve it in new cultural projects. These practices also pose specific problems for managers of cultural heritage in both, the sphere of planning, organizing, motivating and controlling as well as, and at this point it is in fact most important, financing the last traces of minority heritage and new projects aimed at restoring and building the memory of them in the democratic societies of this part of Europe.

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